

ORIENTAL CANADIANS

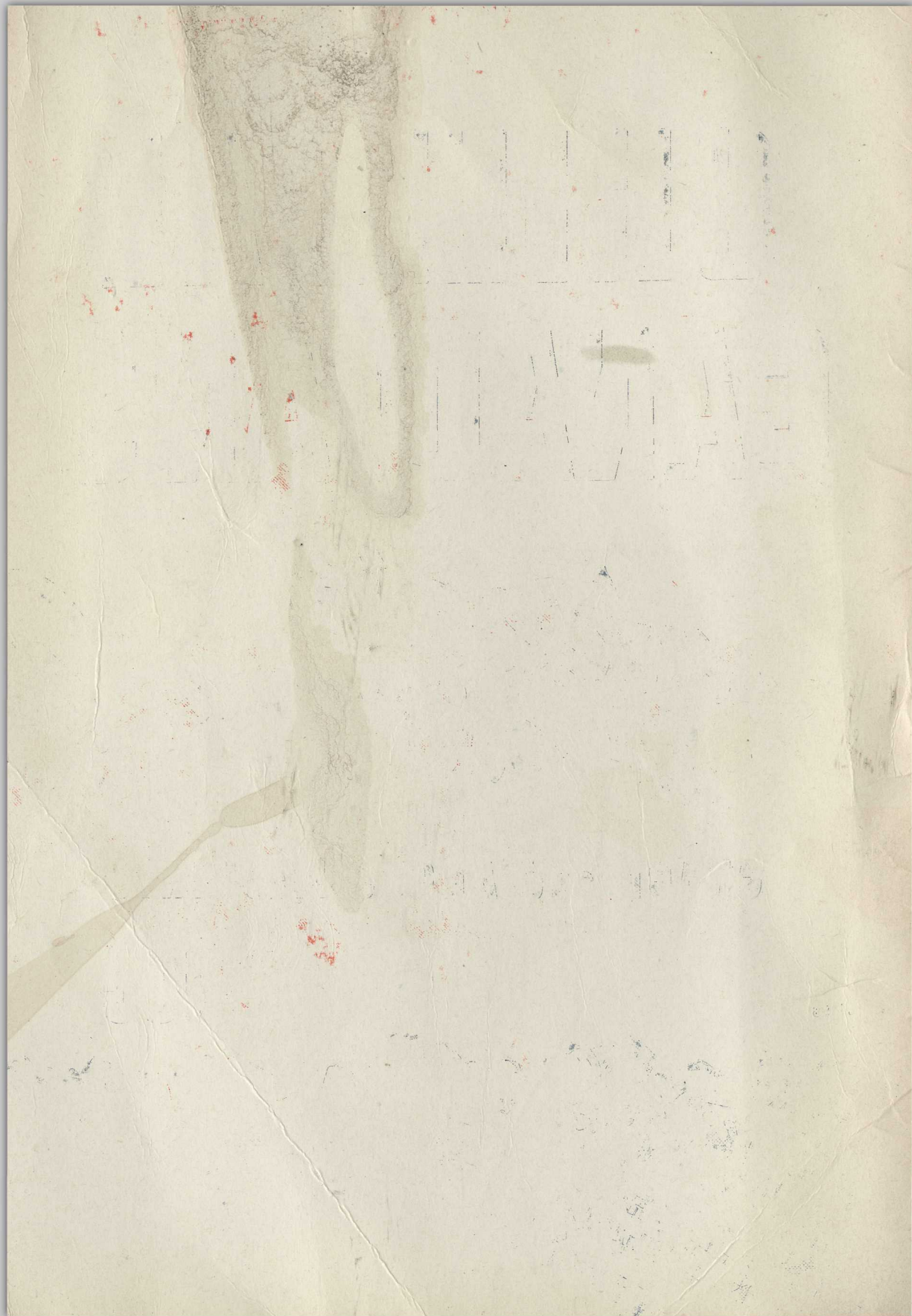
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or citizens?*

GRACE and ANGUS MacINNIS

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ORIENTAL CANADIANS

Outcasts or Citizens

?

by

GRACE and ANGUS MacINNIS

“RACISM is essentially a pretentious way of saying that ‘I belong to the best people.’ For such a conviction it is the most gratifying formula that has ever been discovered, for neither my own unworthiness nor the accusations of others can ever dislodge me from my position—a position which was determined in the womb of my mother at conception. It avoids all embarrassing questions about my conduct of life and nullifies all embarrassing claims by ‘inferior’ groups about their own achievements and ethical standards.

“It has also the advantage of great simplicity. It avoids any of the actual complexities of human nature and of human history and sets up a five-word proposition which the most uneducated can remember and glory in: ‘I belong to the Elect.’ For political purposes the racist formula has no rival. . . .

“The formula ‘I belong to the Elect’ has a far longer history than has modern racism. These are fighting words among the simplest naked savages. Among them this formula is an integral part of their whole life-experience, which is, from our point of view, incredibly limited.”

—RUTH BENEDICT

in “Race and Racism.”

ORIENTAL-CANADIANS . . . OUTCASTS OR CITIZENS?

By

GRACE *and* ANGUS MacINNIS

AMONG the most difficult problems confronting the Canadian people are those concerning racial minorities. Hitler fanned the flames of race hatred for his own purposes, but the Nazi dictator was not alone in using this means to divide and rule. Here in Canada racial animosities have been fomented by those who were eager to continue the exploitation of the Canadian people. On the one hand, they have cried loudly against those of alien races; on the other, they have kept open channels of immigration to provide a reservoir of cheap labor. "Profitable patriotism" has its victories in peace no less than in war.

No single minority problem is more urgent than that of the Orientals in British Columbia. It is likely that the CCF will shortly be called upon to administer the affairs of the province, and we must have a policy ready to deal with this unsolved social issue left to us by capitalist governments of the past. Their job was to protect the interests of the minority, beclouding the minds of the majority by emotion and prejudice. Ours will be to legislate for the welfare of the people, securing at every step their understanding and co-operation. It is in this spirit that the CCF must approach the Oriental problem.

ORIENTALS IN CANADA

Because Canada's Orientals are located mainly in British Columbia, it has been taken largely for granted that this is a purely local issue. British Columbia has always protested that, owing to Ottawa's control of immigration and other policies, the Oriental question must be considered on a Canada-wide basis. This is more obvious now that those of Japanese origin are being settled in other provinces, and the Dominion government is accepting responsibility for their removal from the Pacific coast.

Towards the end of this pamphlet will be found the 1943 Convention Statement of the British Columbia section of the CCF, dealing with the Orientals. This statement makes it clear that the Oriental issue is but a part of the problem of racial minorities in Canada, which, in turn, is but a part of the world-problem which must come up for discussion and solution at world conferences following the present conflict.

The war has focused attention upon those of Japanese origin in Canada, but it must not be forgotten that the term "Oriental" includes citizens of Chinese and East Indian (Hindu) origin as well. These two latter groups have also incurred hostility and they continue to be handicapped by discriminatory legislation in regard to the franchise and by various economic and social disqualifications. There is every reason to believe that, when Canada is no longer at war with Japan, the age-old economic factors will operate to put them once more in the same category as citizens of Japanese origin.

Probably the most authentic statistics available as to the number of Orientals resident in Canada and in British Columbia are those of the Dominion government census, which is taken every ten years. The following census figures for 1931 and 1941 show the number of persons of Oriental origin:

In Canada

	1931	1941
Chinese	46,519	34,627
Japanese	23,342	23,149
East Indians	1,400	1,465

In British Columbia

Chinese	27,139	18,619
Japanese	22,205	22,196
East Indians	1,283	1,345

It will be noted that those of Chinese origin have tended to settle across Canada, while those of Japanese and East Indian origin have remained almost entirely in British Columbia. The number of Chinese has dropped considerably during the last decade, a trend likely to continue because Chinese immigration has been virtually cut off since 1923, and because their women were never permitted to enter Canada in large numbers. While the Japanese population shows little change in the decade, the future trend will probably be upward, although their birthrate is declining relatively and never was of the proportions that alarmists imagined. The East Indian figures are scarcely large enough to concern even alarmists.

The task of the CCF is to determine the best way of dealing with these population groups, both from the standpoint of the Canadian community and of the minorities involved. To understand CCF policy in this matter it is essential to review briefly the story of how the Orientals came to Canada and to consider the factors which have made their presence a problem.

BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT IMPORT ORIENTALS

The history of Oriental immigration into Canada is essentially the story of how cheap labor was welcomed and imported by the large employers of labor. Many instances could be given, but here are two outstanding examples:

Canadian Pacific Railway: In 1881 when the transcontinental line was being built, the C.P.R. imported large numbers of Chinese from China and the United States. From 1881 to 1884 inclusive, 15,701 Chinese entered British Columbia. In answer to protests from the province, the Dominion government stated that it could neither influence the C.P.R. to employ white labor nor could it afford to aid white immigration.

Wellington Colliery Company: When the Legislature of British Columbia tried to exclude further Orientals by passing the Immigration Act, the Lieutenant-Governor refused his assent on the ground that the Act would be disallowed as it had been before. The Lieutenant-Governor happened to be Sir James Dunsmuir, president of the Wellington Colliery Company, one of the largest importers of Oriental labor in the province.

Further examples could be given, but these are sufficient to show how **big business and government combined to create the Oriental problem.** The Dominion government had its own reasons for allowing it to grow unchecked:

Trade Treaty with Japan: In 1907 Sir Wilfred Laurier signed a trade treaty between Canada and Japan, quieting British Columbia's demand for Oriental exclusion by promising the business men

terminal elevators at Vancouver and a swelling grain trade with the Orient.

Another Treaty: Following anti-Oriental riots in Vancouver in 1907, Ottawa signed a further treaty with Japan, international considerations being "so delicate" that the terms remained shrouded in mystery for some time. Later it was discovered that they permitted Japan to send large numbers of immigrants to Canada every year. In 1928 the "Gentlemen's Agreement" limited the number to 150 yearly.

From all this it is evident that **the interests of private profit prevailed over the need of coming to grips with a growing social problem which had been created by the importation of cheap labor.**

PREJUDICE MAINLY ECONOMIC

The root cause of anti-Oriental feeling has always been economic. Back in 1858, when a gold strike in the Fraser River brought the first Chinese miners to British Columbia, they were welcomed. When the boom collapsed a few years later and they went into road-building, storekeeping, trading and packing, farming, gardening and domestic service, prejudice mounted against them. The reason was that their lower living standards enabled them to undercut white workers.

But up through the years this root cause was always skilfully obscured by those who exploited labor. By diverting economic discontent into racial channels, employers and politicians managed to keep **all labor standards down.** The workers did not see the real enemy.

Measures passed against the Orientals included head tax for the Chinese and the disenfranchisement in all elections of Chinese, Japanese and East Indians.

No single measure was passed to compel employers to pay the same wages to Orientals as to whites and thus end competition from a low-income group. On the contrary:

In 1934 the British Columbia Board of Industrial Relations issued a minimum wage order for the sawmill industry which made it possible for an employer to hire up to 25 percent of his workers at wages of 25c an hour while those of the rest are fixed at 35c. In practice, this 25 percent has frequently been Oriental.

Always the story has been the same. In good times the anti-Oriental feeling abates; in depressions it becomes acute. Its curve has very little to do with the color of the skin or the slant of the eyes; it is mainly economic. During the war of 1914-18, when labor was scarce, employers appealed to Ottawa to be allowed to import more Orientals, but were refused. One request was supported by the Vancouver Board of Trade.

ECONOMIC COMPETITION WORLD-WIDE

Socialists take the position that the racial issue is essentially a world problem which cannot be properly settled until we have world-wide labor standards of living. Seeking to exclude racial minorities from any one country is, in itself, no cure for the real disease: economic competition.

On July 11, 1924, J. S. Woodsworth explained the socialist viewpoint to the House of Commons when he replied to one of the numerous anti-Oriental speeches of A. W. Neill, M.P. Mr. Woodsworth said:

"But I call attention to the fact, as I have done on previous occasions, that mere exclusion of Asiatics will not solve the economic problem of the competition

of the Oriental races. The fact is that if steamers cannot be repaired cheaply enough on this side of the Pacific, they are repaired on the other side. The fact is that these ships which enter our ports from China, Japan and other parts of the Orient are bringing in cheap goods that are made by cheap Oriental labor, and these goods compete with our goods, and thus with our workmen. So I repeat, exclusion is no final solution of the economic problem.

"However, I protest as emphatically as I can against the attitude taken by the member for Comox-Alberni when he used words something like this: That the preservation of our civilization depends on the dominance of white races over the other races of the world. If that be the case, then the sooner this civilization perishes from off the face of the earth, the better. Does the hon. member mean to say that we of the white race must eternally bestride this earth and keep other races in subordination? It seems to me that this is the very doctrine which some people accused the Germans of preaching, and for the defeat of which the world war was supposed to have been fought. It is this use of the word 'dominance', this idea of some superior Nordic race, that is responsible for a great deal of the trouble which we have at the present time, and I do not think that such statement should go unchallenged. The hon. member recognized that this was indeed a world problem, but I submit that when he advocated exclusion and expressed a great deal of prejudice against other races, he did not offer anything like a world solution of the problem."—(Hansard, p. 4357).

CCF MOVES TO BAR IMMIGRATION

Socialists, however, recognize that world solutions will not be achieved overnight and that they must deal

with the problems of their particular area in the best possible way at any given time. Realizing that business would do nothing about Oriental competition in British Columbia, realizing that the old-line parties would do nothing except raise a furore at election time, Angus MacInnis, on behalf of the CCF group introduced the following motion into the House of Commons in 1936:

"Whereas it is detrimental to the best interests of Canada that there should be in the country groups to whom because of race or religious beliefs, we do not extend all the rights of citizenship:

"Therefore be it resolved, that, in the opinion of this House, the government should take the necessary measures to exclude from the country all persons belonging to these groups to whom we do not grant the full rights and privileges of citizenship."

This motion was lost by 15 votes to 186, **every Liberal and every Conservative in the House voting against it.** In effect it said: Either we refuse to let people into Canada, or, if we permit them to enter, we give them full citizenship rights. Prominent among those who defeated this motion—and thus refused to make a straightforward decision on the Oriental issue—were A. W. Neill and Tom Reid, British Columbia M.P.'s who had denounced the Orientals for years and who were evidently much more concerned to keep on denouncing them than to deal with the question of their citizenship rights.

Accusations that this was a "trick motion" to put others on the spot and to avoid recording the CCF stand on excluding further Orientals, were disproved in 1938 when A. W. Neill brought in a motion to bar Japanese from entering Canada in future. (Chinese were effectively excluded in 1923.) Mr. Neill's motion was de-

feated by 42 votes to 79, **all CCF members supporting it and the Government rejecting it.** Said Angus MacInnis on this occasion:

"The Oriental problem has given me much concern over quite a number of years because it has never been faced honestly and squarely in this Dominion. . . . Greed for cheap labor brought the Oriental to British Columbia, and greed for trade has kept him coming in."—(Hansard, p. 563).

ORIENTALS — AND CANADIANS

The CCF group thus placed itself clearly on record as opposing the entry of more Orientals to Canada. But what about those already here? And what about their children? Those who foment race prejudices do not attempt to deal with those issues. But they cannot be avoided. Alone among political parties, the CCF has had the vision and courage to insist that hatred is no program and that a real solution must be found.

For those of Oriental origin in Canada there can be only one solution. That is to refuse to draw the color line. Orientals who have become naturalized here, children born here of Oriental parents are Canadians and should be accepted as such in the full sense of the term. Their living-standards, their working-standards, their educational and cultural standards should be on equal levels with those of other Canadians.

Without question they should have full citizenship rights, including the franchise. Many people do not know that, with the sole exception of the Chinese in Saskatchewan, Orientals of all three groups—Chinese, Japanese and East Indian—have the right to vote in every province except British Columbia. The same thing is true of every state in the American union, including the West Coast

states. The CCF is urging that British Columbia cease being the one spot in North America where Orientals cannot become full citizens.

DISABILITIES OF B.C. ORIENTALS

Children of Oriental origin born in Canada are Canadian citizens. In 1924 an agreement was reached with Japan that, unless Japanese-Canadian parents registered their children with the Japanese consul within 14 days of birth, Japan would have no claim on them. Although discrimination against Orientals in British Columbia made this dual citizenship understandable, it was never desirable from a Canadian standpoint. Fewer parents of Japanese origin were registering their children with the consul as time elapsed, and, with the granting of full Canadian citizenship rights, dual citizenship should never again be permitted.

Until the Japanese-Canadians were evacuated from the West Coast areas, their children attended the public schools of the province, went to high school, and, when their parents could afford it, to the university, where their scholarship record was high. But Orientals remain in an inferior position, because of disabilities which may be listed as follows:

- (1) In British Columbia no person of Japanese, Chinese or East Indian origin may vote in federal, provincial or municipal elections. The sole exceptions are Japanese who served in the Canadian forces in the last war and who may vote federally and provincially.
- (2) None can be nominated for school trustee.
- (3) None can serve on a jury.
- (4) None can be employed in the public or municipal services of the province or on public works.

- (5) These barriers prevent Orientals from entering either the profession of law or pharmacy, both of which require eligibility to vote in provincial elections.
- (6) Economic and social pressures have operated to confine those of Oriental origin almost entirely to certain types of farm and industrial work, practically barring the door to the professions.
- (7) Although no legislation has been passed to limit the number of Japanese who may obtain fishing licenses or operate canneries and fish plants, continual pressure has been exercised on both federal and provincial governments to discriminate in issuing these licenses on purely racial grounds. Similar attempts have been made in the matter of business licenses.

When the British Columbia Legislature in 1938 was asked to consider a Vancouver city charter amendment that would allow discrimination against persons of Oriental origin in the matter of licenses, Hon. H. G. T. Perry, then Liberal member for Fort George, accused the city of "Hitler philosophy."

"If we struck out the word 'Asiatics' and put in 'Hebraic,' would we be doing the same thing by law as Hitler is doing in Germany?" he asked. "Your fundamental philosophy and thought on this is exactly the same as Hitler's. Even if it were *intra vires* I would oppose it. . . . Where are you going to stop? We allowed the Orientals to come here. Surely we're going to allow them some human rights."—Vancouver Sun, November 15, 1938).

Mr. Perry's anti-Nazi stand of 1938 is just as necessary now.

TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

It is a well-established principle of both British and Canadian constitutional government that there should be no taxation without representation. Yet today in British Columbia, citizens of Oriental origin, who have no right to vote, are exempt neither from the Taxation Act nor the Income Tax Act. Further, they may, at the discretion of the federal authorities, be called up for military service at any time. No freedom-loving British Columbian would put up with this state of affairs for himself. It is time that we ended it for our fellow-citizens to whom it applies. British fair play, fair play of any kind, repudiates this sort of thing. Tyranny leads to Nazism as it exists in Germany today. If it is not good for the people of Germany, then it is not good for the people of British Columbia.

BEGINNINGS OF CO-OPERATION

Before the war with Japan broke out, there were numerous indications that Canadians of other origins were becoming aroused to the need for having Oriental-Canadians on an equal footing. Several examples may be mentioned:

- (1) Various church denominations kept speaking out for complete equality of citizenship.
- (2) The Camp and Mill Workers' Union, organized in 1920 by Japanese, was accepted into affiliation in 1927 by the Trades and Labor Congress of Canada.
- (3) In 1931 this union persuaded the Congress convention, which met that year in Vancouver, to endorse "equality of treatment and full rights of citizenship" for the second generation Japanese.
- (4) A West Coast fishermen's union accepted Orientals as members on the same terms as others.

- (5) In various co-operative and community undertakings throughout British Columbia the Orientals were gradually being accepted on the same basis as other citizens.

An eloquent tribute to the character of a fellow-Canadian was given in the House of Common on July 12, 1943, by R. T. Graham, Liberal member from Saskatchewan, when he said:

"In justice to a very brave man and a very fine citizen of Japanese origin, I cannot let the statement made by the hon. member for New Westminster (Tom Reid) go unchallenged. I have in mind a young Japanese who served with distinction in my own company in France and who was decorated by this nation. He saved the life of one of his comrades by performing a very brave deed. He came back and settled in my district where he is now farming and is one of the most highly respected farmers in his particular area. Today he has two sons serving with the Canadian forces in this war." (Hansard, p. 4785).

EVACUATION FROM DEFENCE AREAS

Space will not permit a review of the story of the evacuation of Canadians of Japanese origin from the "protected area" of British Columbia. The attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 caused fear of possible sabotage from Orientals on the West Coast. In British Columbia a citizens' committee was formed to press for action. Finally the British Columbia Security Commission was established by the Federal Government. It undertook the removal of those of Japanese origin, receiving, with few exceptions, their wholehearted co-operation and it is noteworthy that throughout this period the Mounted Police failed to discover a single act of sabotage on the part of any person of Japanese origin.

Now the great majority are settled in the mountain valleys of the Interior in pioneer conditions, with their homes disrupted, their businesses gone; their property is being sold by the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property, their educational and social needs are neglected, and great uncertainty about the future hangs over their heads. Comparatively few have found the opportunity to take their families to eastern Canada. Small wonder that they tend to cling together in the Interior settlements rather than to plunge into the unknown East where hostility might prove even greater than the hostility they had known on the West Coast.

THE CCF POLICY

Building the Cooperative Commonwealth is not an easy task. At every stage we are confronted by problems yet unsolved by any social engineer. Some of these are so hedged about with the prejudices and hatreds of competitive society that we are tempted to yield to popular clamor and leave them to become even more formidable. We shall do so at the cost of our future social order. For, unless the foundations of the Cooperative Commonwealth are based on the solid rock of socialist principle, the new structure cannot withstand the attacks of those who seek to destroy it.

During these war years and in the period to follow, the CCF is rising to power in Canada. Whether in opposition or in office, we must face the tremendous job of constructing a new economic and social system in this country as a part of the planned and more just world order in whose creation we must share. In this critical transition we dare not lose sight of our objective. Weakness and appeasement on fundamental issues now would spell disaster later.

The Regina Manifesto, adopted at the first National Convention of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1933, has in its preamble this paragraph:

"The new social order at which we aim is not one in which individuality will be crushed out by a system of regimentation. Nor shall we interfere with cultural rights of racial or religious minorities. What we seek is a proper collective organization of our economic resources such as will make possible a much greater degree of leisure and a much richer individual life for every citizen."

Section 12 is entitled "Freedom" and outlines CCF ideas concerning it. One of the clauses reads:

"Equal treatment before the law of all residents of Canada irrespective of race, nationality or religious or political beliefs."

Ten years later (April, 1943) the British Columbia section of the CCF met in its annual convention to consider various problems, among them that of the Oriental in British Columbia, with particular reference to those of Japanese origin. Recognizing the need for a policy to cover the immediate war situation and, at the same time, to indicate the lines along which a post-war settlement of the Oriental question must be found, it laid down the following principles:

"This Convention believes that the Japanese question is but a part of the problem of all racial minorities in Canada and that it must be solved along the lines of social justice set forth in the Atlantic Charter.

"This solution can only come about through the elimination for all Canadians of economic insecurity which is the underlying cause of all racial antagonisms.

"The present proponents of repatriation, the representatives of big business and reaction, base their proposals on a return to the old pre-war conditions of unemployment and resulting racial jealousies and

hatreds. These reactionaries who shout so blatantly for repatriation were the very ones who encouraged the entry to Canada of cheap labor for purposes of labor exploitation.

"While the CCF was in favor of evacuation of the Japanese from the protected area for reasons of defense, it must be noted that such demands immediate action by the Dominion Government to avoid aggravation of social and economic problems in British Columbia during the post-war period. In this connection the following facts are noted:

"The majority of the Japanese families are now being maintained and housed in crowded and temporary quarters at public expense in a few centres in the interior of B.C. Arrangements for limited relocation in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario, have been negotiated only for the duration of the war. Opportunities for productive employment have been negligible and their financial resources are being exhausted. Partial education of Japanese children, financed by the Dominion Government, is mainly under the direction of the Japanese themselves. Substantial investments now under Government administration, are still held by the Japanese in various business enterprises in B.C.

"It may therefore be anticipated that upon cessation of hostilities pressure will be exercised by the Japanese and by the province and communities where they are now resident, for their immediate return to the Coast area. This will confront communities in this area with acute problems during the demobilization period. Japanese workers have been displaced in their former occupations, housing accommodation has been re-allocated, and educational facilities are overtaxed. It is therefore imperative that the Dominion Government should now plan to protect the Coast area against any sudden return of an impoverished Japanese commun-

ity; seeking re-establishment as a racial group, at a time and under conditions provocative of disturbances.

"The proposed repatriation does not offer any practical solution of the problems likely to arise in the period immediately following the defeat of Japan. Years may elapse in the stabilization of affairs in the Orient, and before the peace conference. Canada cannot act in such a matter independently but must act in conference with the United Nations, having reference to a similar situation in the United States and the Hawaiian Islands. Eventually all matters affecting racial minorities must be dealt with as an international question at a world peace conference in accordance with the principles of the Atlantic Charter.

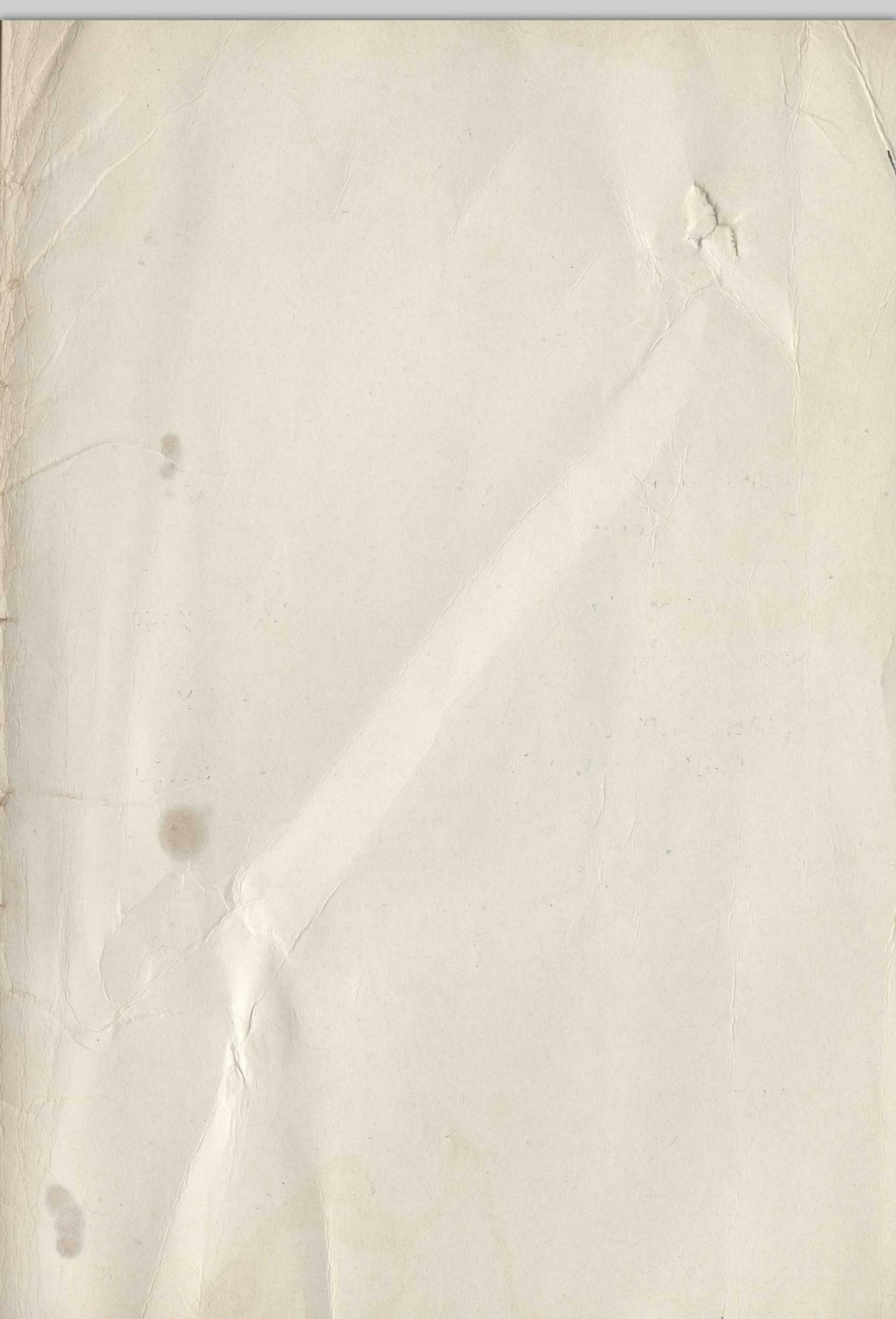
"As immediate measure possible to Canada, and designed to facilitate post-war reconstruction and minimize racial friction, this Convention advocates:

- "1. That Japanese be now assisted to obtain productive and permanent employment outside the protected area, and in other provinces at prevailing rates of pay to protect labor standards, and under conditions enabling them to re-settle with their families. This will substantially relieve the present manpower shortage and mitigate against any future concentration on the Coast in B.C. In this connection, attention is directed to the fact that a similar policy is being carried out in the United States, to the point where loyal Japanese-Americans are being enrolled in combatant units of the American Army.
- "2. That transfer of investments held by Japanese in B.C. to other sections of the Dominion be facilitated.
- "3. That education of the Japanese children be conducted in strict conformity with Canadian standards and under qualified Canadian teachers.

"4. That responsibility for the satisfactory re-settlement of Japanese across Canada be fixed now with the Dominion Government."

Today in Canada, as in every other part of the world, a battle is going on between two kinds of ideas. On the one side are those who believe in a way of life based on ruthless competition. They look upon the peoples of other nations and races as rivals for wealth and power, or as subjects for exploitation. They use their control over the sources of education and publicity to fan the latent sparks of race prejudice into the destroying flames of race hatred. They wish to keep the Orientals in a state of inferiority which tends to depress the living-standards of all workers, regardless of color. If they can keep the workers divided over racial differences, they can hide the real causes of unemployment and poverty.

On the other side are those who think in co-operative terms. They insist on a single standard of citizenship for all Canadians. They refuse to join in the cry for "repatriation." Even if it were physically possible to remove every person of Oriental origin to Asia—which it is not—it would not be repatriation for the great majority. It would be exile. You cannot repatriate native-born Canadians by sending them elsewhere. But you can help them to fuller citizenship in this, the land of their birth. You can help to place them on a footing of social, economic and political equality. Only in this way can workers of all racial origins stand shoulder to shoulder to raise their living conditions. Only in this way can those who call themselves Christians prove that they are prepared to carry the principle of brotherhood into effect. Only in this way can we have unity and harmony in Canada, for unity and harmony are based on equality and social justice. Only in this way can we in Canada make our contribution to the building of a world where peace and brotherhood will prevail.





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